

Message Text

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ACTION ITF-05

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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

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TAGS: SREF, BM

SUBJECT: STATUS OF CAMBODIAN AND VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN BURMA

SUMMARY: THERE ARE CURRENTLY 26 CAMBODIAN AND SOUTH VIETNAMESE IN RANGOON WHO HAVE REQUESTED POLITICAL REFUGE IN THE U.S. ALL 26 (15 CAMBODIANS AND 11 VIETNAMESE) ARE REMNANTS OF NOW DEFUNCT DIPLOMATIC OR CONSULAR MISSIONS. IN ACCORDANCE WITH DEPARTMENT INSTRUCTIONS THE EMBASSY HAS INSISTED THAT THESE 26 SEEK REFUGE FROM OTHER SOURCES. IT NOW APPEARS THAT THEY HAVE MET WITH ENOUGH SUCCESS SO THAT THEY NEED NOT BE OF IMMEDIATE HUMANITARIAN CONCERN TO THE USG. THIS TELEGRAM IS A REPORT OF THEIR PROGRESS. END SUMMARY.

1. ALL 26 WERE PUT IN TOUCH WITH THE UNHCR, BOTH DIRECTLY TO ITS GENEVA OFFICE AND THROUGH THE LOCAL UNDP REPRESENTATIVE (UNHCR DOES NOT HAVE AN OFFICE IN RANGOON). THE UN INSTRUCTED THE REFUGEES TO SEEK ASSISTANCE DIRECTLY FROM GOVERNMENTS REPRESENTED HERE IN RANGOON, BUT PROMISED TO INTERVENE MORE ACTIVELY IN THEIR CASES IF ALL OTHER APPROACHES FAILED.

2. THE LOCAL FRENCH EMBASSY HAS BEEN THE MOST RECEPTIVE, AND IT HAS OBTAINED PERMISSION TO ISSUE THE REFUGEES WITH MULTIPLE ENTRY TOURIST VISAS. ACCORDING TO LOCAL FRENCH OFFICIALS THEIR GOVERN-
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MENT AS A MATTER OF POLICY, WILL NOT GRANT ASYLUM TO REFUGEES UN-

LESS THEY ARE ACTUALLY IN FRANCE. THE TOURIST VISAS ARE OFFERED TO ALLOW THE REFUGEES INTO FRANCE SO THAT THEY CAN OFFICIALLY REQUEST ASYLUM. THE LOCAL FRENCH INSIST THAT SUCH A REQUEST WOULD SURELY BE GRANTED. APART FROM THE FRENCH, THE AUSTRALIANS AND CANADIANS (THROUGH THEIR HIGH COMMISSION IN SINGAPORE) ARE STILL CONSIDERING REQUESTS FOR REFUGE SUBMITTED BY THE CAMBODIANS AND VIETNAMESE AND HAVE GIVEN NO INDICATION OF WHAT THEIR DECISIONS WILL BE.

3. THE FRENCH HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEIR HOSPITALITY DOES NOT INCLUDE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE. THE AUSTRALIANS AND CANADIAN, DEPENDING UPON WHETHER OR NOT THEY ADMIT THE REFUGEES MAY OR MAY NOT PROVIDE FINANCIAL AID. EMBASSY RANGOON HAS PUT THE 26 REFUGEES, NONE OF WHOM HAVE SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL RESOURCES, IN TOUCH WITH THE LOCAL CHURCH WORLD SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE AND HE HAS APPARENTLY BEEN AUTHORIZED TO OFFER FUNDS FOR TRAVEL AND RESETTLEMENT. THE LOCAL UNDP REPRESENTATIVE HAS INFORMED THE EMBASSY THAT HE HAS BEEN AUTHORIZED BY THE UNHCR TO PROVIDE AN UNSPECIFIED AMOUNT OF FINANCIAL HELP TO THE REFUGEES.

4. THE BIGGEST OBSTACLE TO SETTLING THE CASE OF THE 26 REFUGEES IS THAT THEY ALL WANT TO GO TO THE U.S. INSTEAD OF FRANCE. THEY HAVE BEEN LESS THAN ENTHUSIASTIC IN SEEKING ASSISTANCE FROM SOURCES OTHER THAN THIS EMBASSY, PRESUMABLY BECAUSE THEY FELT THAT IF ALL ELSE FAILED WE WOULD SURELY TAKE THEM. IN FACT, THEY HAVE MISREPRESENTED THE FRENCH OFFER IN AN APPARENT ATTEMPT TO MAKE THE FRENCH SEEM TO HAVE REJECTED ALL REQUESTS FOR ASYLUM. ONE OF THE VIETNAMESE HAS EVEN REFUSED TO APPLY FOR THE TOURIST VISA AND CONTINUES TO INSIST THAT HE BE GRANTED ASYLUM BEFORE GOING TO FRANCE EVEN THOUGH THE LOCAL FRENCH HAVE INFORMED HIM OF FRENCH POLICY. WE SUSPECT THAT THIS INDIVIDUAL IS STILL HOLDING OUT FOR THE U.S. FROM TALKING TO THEM IT IS APPARENT THAT MANY OF THE REFUGEES ARE HOPING THAT THE AUSTRALIANS AND CANADIANS SAY NO SO THAT THE USG IS FORCED TO TAKE THEM.

5. THE REFUGEES ARE STILL NOT UNDER ANY PRESSURE TO LEAVE RANGOON RIGHT AWAY. HOW LONG SUCH GUB PATIENCE WILL CONTINUE WHEN REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE NEW SAIGON AND PHNOM PENH GOVERNMENTS ARRIVE IS OPEN TO QUESTION HOWEVER.

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6. THE EMBASSY--H*IRLY CERTAINSVHAT WHATEVER THE AUSTRALIANS AND CANDIANS SAY THE REFUGEES WILL STILL INSIST UPON GOING TO THE U.S. INSTEAD OF FRANCE. HOWEVER, UNLESS THE FRENCH ARRANGEMENT FALLS THROUGH AT THE LAST MOMENT THE EMBASSY SEES NO OBLIGATION ON THE PART OF THE USG TO ACCEDE TO THEIR DESIRES. OSBORN

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